

Acadian Ballads

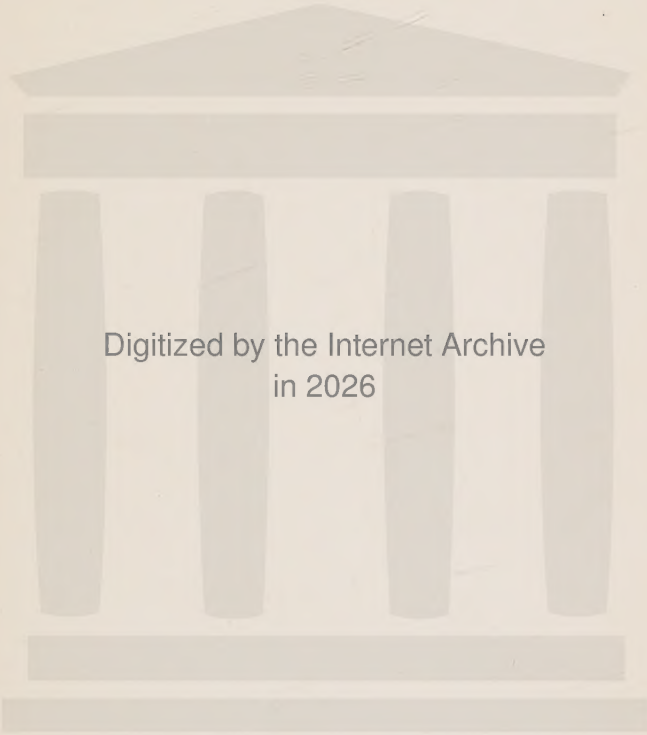
Arthur Wentworth Eaton

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ACADIAN LEGENDS AND LYRICS

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TALES OF A GARRISON TOWN (with C.
L. Betts)

POEMS OF THE CHRISTIAN YEAR

POEMS IN NOTABLE ANTHOLOGIES

RECOLLECTIONS OF A GEORGIA LOYALIST,
Edited and Introduced

EDUCATIONAL WORKS, Compiled and
Edited

FAMILY HISTORICAL MONOGRAPHS

ACADIAN BALLADS
AND
DE SOTO'S LAST DREAM

ACADIAN
BALLADS

AND
DE SOTO'S LAST DREAM

BY
ARTHUR WENTWORTH
EATON

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1905

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TO THE MEMORY OF
WILLIAM EATON
AND
ANNA AUGUSTA WILLOUGHBY
HAMILTON EATON

PREFACE

IN 1710 the ancient poetical name Acadia given by noble French explorers to the beautiful Province of Nova Scotia was changed, but for purposes of poetry the name will forever endure. The history of the Province covers more than a century of intermittent French rule and nearly two centuries of continuous English rule and in both periods are to be found remarkable events and notable women and men. Some of the more striking of these events and the more notable of these men and women are commemorated in the following poems. The Tory ballads touch one of the most picturesque events in Anglo Saxon history, the migration of some thirty thousand of the people of what are now leading states of the American Union to the loyal "Province beside the Sea." Among these were almost the whole of the aristocracy of Boston and a large number of the proudest people

PREFACE

of New York. Many of the exiled Tories settled finally in the province of New Brunswick, not a few embarked for England, some when peace was restored came back to their old homes in New England or New York, but a large number staid in Nova Scotia and founded important families in Halifax and other, smaller, towns. The ballad entitled "Puritan Planters" commemorates the advent to Acadia in 1760 and '61 of some thousands of New England people, who thus came into possession of the valuable lands of the expatriated French.

In this volume, in point of time the French lyrics should have come first; it has seemed best, however, to reject the chronological order and give the English ballads first. Wherever the poems, either of the French or the English period, are historical the proper dates have been given. Throughout the volume will be found, it is hoped, somewhat of the vivid local colour of the famed Acadian Land.

November, 1905

CONTENTS

PART I

	PAGE
PURITAN PLANTERS.....	3
THE ARRIVAL OF HOWE'S FLEET.....	9
A BALLAD OF THE TORIES.....	15
LADY WENTWORTH.....	21
OLD WHARVES.....	26
ST. PAUL'S CHURCH.....	29
THE COTTAGE.....	34
ORCHARDS IN BLOOM.....	37
ATLANTIC MISTS.....	39
IMPRESSIONS.....	41
THE LADY OF THE FLOWERS.....	42
PURPLE ASTERS.....	46
ALICE HAMILTON.....	48
JOSEPHINE.....	51
DEATH IN ACADIA.....	53
A SAINT.....	57

CONTENTS

PART II

	PAGE
THE LEGEND OF GLOOSCAP.....	61
L'ILE SAINTE CROIX.....	65
POUTRINCOURT'S RETURN TO PORT ROYAL..	68
L'ORDRE DE BON TEMPS.....	72
THE BAPTISM OF MEMBERTOU.....	76
LA TOUR AND BIENCOURT.....	80
MADAME LA TOUR.....	83
THE NAMING OF THE GASPHEREAU.....	86
THE GHOSTS OF THE ACADIANS.....	91
THE PHANTOM LIGHT OF THE BAIE DES CHALEURS.....	97
DE SOTO'S LAST DREAM.....	100
PORT ROYAL.....	105
GRAND PRÉ.....	106
CHEBUCTO BAY.....	107

PART I

PURITAN PLANTERS

1760

THE rocky slopes for emerald had changed
their garb of gray

When the vessels from Connecticut came sailing
up the Bay,

There were diamonds on every wave that drew the
strangers on,

And bands of sapphire mist about the brows of
Blomidon.

Five years in desolation the Acadian land had lain,
Five golden harvest moons had wooed the fallow
fields in vain,

Five times the winter snows had slept and summer
sunsets smiled

On lonely clumps of willows, and fruit trees grow-
ing wild.

ACADIAN BALLADS

There was silence in the forest and along the Minas
shore,
And not a habitation from Canard to Beau Séjour,
But many a blackened rafter and many a broken
wall
Told the story of Acadia's prosperity and fall;

And even in Nature's gladness, in the matchless
month of June,
When every day she swept her harp and found the
strings in tune,
The land seemed calling wildly for its owners far
away,
The exiles scattered on the coast, from Maine to
Charleston Bay,

Where with many bitter longings for their fair homes
and their dead,
They bowed their heads in anguish and would not
be comforted,
And like the Jewish exiles, long ago, beyond the sea,
Refused to sing the songs of home, in their cap-
tivity.

But the simple Norman peasant-folk shall till the
land no more,

PURITAN PLANTERS

For the vessels from Connecticut have anchored by
the shore,
And many a sturdy Puritan, his mind with Scrip-
ture stored,
Rejoices he has found at last, "the garden of the
Lord."

There are families from Tolland, from Killing-
worth and Lyme,
Gentle mothers, tender maidens, and strong men
in their prime,
There are lovers who have plighted their vows in
Coventry,
And sweet, confiding children, born in Newport by
the sea.

They come as came the Hebrews into their prom-
ised land,
Not as to rough New England shores came first the
Pilgrim band;
The Minas fields were fruitful, and the Gaspereau
had borne
To seaward many a vessel with its freight of yellow
corn.

They come with hearts as true as are their manners
blunt and cold,

ACADIAN BALLADS

To found a race of noblemen of Calvinistic mould,
A race of earnest people whom the coming years
shall teach

The broader ways of knowledge, and the gentler
forms of speech.

They come as Puritans, but who shall say their
hearts are blind

To the subtle charms of nature, and the love of
humankind?

The rigorous New England laws have shaped their
thought, 'tis true,

But human laws can never wholly Heaven's work
undo,

And tears fall fast from many an eye, long time
unused to weep,

For o'er the fields lie whitening the bones of cows
and sheep,

The faithful cows that used to feed upon the broad
Grand Pré,

And with their tinkling bells come slowly home at
close of day.

And where the Acadian village stood, its roofs o'er-
grown with moss,

PURITAN PLANTERS

And the simple wooden chapel, with its altar and
its cross,

And where the forge of Basil sent its sparks toward
the sky,

The purple thistle blossoms, and the pink fireweed
grows high.

* * * * *

The broken dykes have been rebuilt, a century
and more,

The cornfields stretch their furrows from Canard
to Beau Séjour,

Five generations have been reared beside the broad
Grand Pré,

Since the vessels from Connecticut came sailing up
the Bay.

And now across the meadows, while the farmers
reap and sow,

The engine shrieks its discords to the hills of
Gaspereau,

And ever onward to the sea the restless Fundy tide
Bears playful pleasure yachts and busy trade ships,
side by side.

And the Puritan has yielded to the softening touch
of time,

ACADIAN BALLADS

Like him who still content remained in Killing-
worth and Lyme,
And graceful homes of prosperous men make all
the landscape fair,
And mellow creeds and ways of life are rooted
everywhere.

And churches nestle lovingly on many a glad hill-
side,
And holy bells ring out their music in the eventide;
But here and there on untilled ground, apart from
glebe or town,
Some lone, surviving apple tree stands blossomless
and brown,

And many a traveller has found in summer, as he
strayed,
Some long-forgotten cellar in the deepest thicket's
shade,
And clumps of willows by the dykes, sweet-scented,
fair, and green,
That seemed to tell again the story of Evangeline.

THE ARRIVAL OF HOWE'S FLEET

1776

THE fogs have lifted from the wharves, the
harbour's course is clear,

And groups of men with eager eyes crowd each
projecting pier;

Some climb the grassy slope that lies above the
wooden town,

Some from the rambling roofs that shade the un-
paved streets look down,

And all are gazing oceanward beyond the islands
green,

Where, specks of white against the blue, a hundred
sail are seen;

The fishermen in suburbs lone, from cabins by the
shore

Look out in fear lest France has come to claim the
land once more.

A hundred sail, and on they move across the harbour
bar,

ACADIAN BALLADS

And every watcher strains his eyes to see what sort
they are,—

But as the squadron closer comes fear changes to
surprise,

For at the mast of every ship the flag of England
flies.

“The Tory fleet!” the word goes round, the “fleet
from Boston Bay!

What news, good friends of Howe’s command,
bring you this bleak March day?

Have you o’ercome the rebel mob and shown them
England’s might?

And shall we make great bonfires blaze about the
town to-night?”

“No, friendly Sirs of Halifax, give us a pitying
hand,

We come as routed troops, and not as men in
proud command,

The raw recruits have more than matched our
veteran force, and we

Have given the siege of Boston up and brought our
ships to sea.”

And now the vessels come to port, and Howe him-
self is seen

THE ARRIVAL OF HOWE'S FLEET

Among red-tunicked officers of land troops and
marine,
And sailors, soon, with rolling gait, and soldiers
trim and neat,
March up the wharves that fringe the town, and
fill each narrow street.

At last a myriad canvas tents are pitched on the
Parade,
'Neath which, below the silent stars, a myriad
heads are laid,
For Howe has brought, beside the troops, from the
long siege away,
The gentry of the capital of Massachusetts Bay.

What change for men who long have housed in
city mansions fair,
What grief to find themselves at once of all their
goods stripped bare;
But O the gentle women reared in luxury and pride,
And O the homesick little ones, that all the voyage
have cried!

From Tremont, Milk, and Marlborough Streets
these wanderers have fled,
From stately homes near Beacon hill, closed sud-
denly in dread,

ACADIAN BALLADS

From Cambridge old, and Roxbury, and Milton,
here they meet,

This multitude compelled to ask protection of
the fleet.

The Brattles and the Brinleys and the Olivers are
here,

The Gores and Greens and Sewalls, Belcher,
Caner, and Lechmere,

The Royals and the Vassalls—can it be such men
as they

Have been driven to hopeless exile from their
homes on Boston Bay?

Aye, the mansions are all empty near the base of
Beacon Hill,

Or enshrine plebeian strangers, and the enemy at will
In the Province House and churches everlastingly
reviles

The haughty Tory gentry and their prophet,
Mather Byles.

From what superior walks of life these courtly men
have come,

In council room, at bench or bar, and in the incessant
hum

Of Boston's richest trade-marts they have long
been used to rule,

THE ARRIVAL OF HOWE'S FLEET

Their minds and manners moulded in the most
punctilious school.

In powdered wigs and waistcoats fine and swords
that dangled free

They exercised a princely sort of hospitality,
Their homes with heavy silken stuffs and orient
woods were fair,

And spicy perfumes of the east lent sweetness to the
air.

These ladies, too, the mistresses of every art re-
fined,

With elegance of form and rarer elegance of mind,
Their petticoats of rich brocade, their jewels and
point lace

Scarce emphasized their breeding high or added to
their grace.

No wonder, then, these exiles feel the present but a
dream

That certainly will vanish, as goes by the turbid
stream;

But the past will never come again, whate'er their
fate may prove,

They have said good bye forever to the homes and
haunts they love.

ACADIAN BALLADS

The future of these gentlefolk encamped beside
the sea,
Can oracle or sibyl strange divine what it shall be?
Where shall these high-born women find homes
fit their charms to hold?
Not surely in this little town less than three decades
old.

Yes, some of them in Halifax shall tarry till they
die,
The men patrician-souled and proud as a nobility,
The women gracious-mannered, yet exclusive as
of yore,
With aversion for republics, loving England more
and more.

Scant praise received these Loyalists from those
they left behind,
Perhaps their minds were prejudiced, perhaps their
eyes were blind,
But, right or wrong, they suffered, and to-day men
yield the claim
That not alone the "Patriots" deserved the patriot
name.

A BALLAD OF THE TORIES

1784

THE Tories are embarking for the Province
by the Sea,
They have left their homes on Broadway and beside
the Battery,
The mansions are deserted that o'erlook the Bow-
ling Green,
And in the highways to the wharves unwonted
sights are seen.

First, matrons fair with powdered hair and haughty
looks go by,
Then gentle maids, whose colour shames the rose-
tints in the sky,
Then fine Colonial gentlemen, and boys of manly
grace,—
But sorrow unmistakeable appears in every face.

There are Barclays and De Lanceys, there are
Purdys, half a score,

ACADIAN BALLADS

There are Livingstons and Ludlows, Bayards,
Thornes, and many more,
There are Rapaljes and Remsens, Wilmots, Wig-
ginses, and Wards,—
Judges, councillors, and farmers, doctors, lawyers,
priests, and bards.

They are pressing to the water on the city's eastern
side,
They are stepping up the planks that reach the
ships that there are tied,
They are waving to their friends on shore most
piteous farewells,
They are weeping in their cabins as weep prisoners
in their cells.

The guns of war are silent that have boomed for
seven years,
The British have been routed, and there seems no
cause for tears,
But the Barclays and De Lanceys are as sad as sad
can be,
And their ships are in the harbour for the Province
by the Sea.

Is it prejudice that sways them, are they blind to
all the wrong

A BALLAD OF THE TORIES

Their compatriots have suffered from the English
rule so long?

Is it cowardly submissiveness that makes these
Tories hate

The newly formed Republic and its officers of
state?

Are the Ludlows and the Robinsons so sunk in
selfishness

That they have no souls to sympathize with common
men's distress;

Are they willing that the people should be slaves
the country o'er

If their own exclusive privilege is only kept secure?

There is surely something better back of protest such
as theirs,

There is good stout-hearted loyalty below such
tears and prayers,

They have loved the flag of England and the throne
so firm and strong,

Though they know King George is narrow and
his ministers are wrong,

And they cannot give allegiance to a governmental
plan

ACADIAN BALLADS

Which concedes the right of sovereign to the very
lowest man,
That makes friends with all fanatics who shout
loud for liberty,
But has no need for Loyalists but shame and
obloquy.

So the Tories are embarking, such a sad, distress-
ful band,
On the rugged shore of Shelburne, in the old
Acadian land,
They will build another city and contented try to
be,
Though they love their homes on Broadway and
beside the Battery.

There the spirit of rebellion will not show its hate-
ful head,
There to English institutions people always will be
wed,
There, though present ills may irritate, men's
hearts will never lag
In loyal love for England and devotion to her flag.

But that rugged shore of Shelburne will be mourn-
ful many a day

A BALLAD OF THE TORIES

With the sighing of the pilgrims who are sailing
fast away

From the homes their love has fashioned, from
the church their faith has reared,

And the churchyard by a thousand hallowed
memories endeared.

Though the skies that overarch them have the same
delightful blue,

Though the friends they value highest like them-
selves are exiles too,

Though good Inglis, who so stoutly for the King
has always prayed,

Will be with them soon as Bishop, to help keep them
undismayed,

They will mourn that England's children such
hostility could show

To the mother who had reared them, and their
spirits will sink low

At the world's degeneration, its distrust of all
things old,

At the shallow views that skeptics in these later
ages hold.

Yield them reverence, not dishonour, this once
execrated band,

ACADIAN BALLADS

It was principle that made them give up their
native land,
They loved their homes on Broadway, but they
loved the old flag more,
And they chose the lot of exiles on a rugged foreign
shore.

So the mansions are deserted that o'erlook the
Bowling Green
And in Manhattan's thoroughfares the owners are
not seen;
But in those streets and houses better men will
never be
Than the Tories who have started for the Province
by the Sea.

LADY WENTWORTH

SIR JOHN WAS CREATED A BARONET IN 1795

A WOMAN of fashion and wit and grace,
The Governor's wife in Portsmouth town,
From Copley's canvas still looks down
Beautiful Frances Wentworth's face.

When the Tories were shorn of rank and power
In somebody's ship she sailed away,
And England's capital many a day
Enjoyed the fair New England flower.

Governor Wentworth, rich and great,
Had stood so staunch for the British crown
That England presently set him down
With a miniature court, in semi-state,

In the loyal province of Acadie,
A land where the British flag still flew
And British bugles daily blew,
A governor once again to be.

ACADIAN BALLADS

Hither the beautiful Frances came
With her worshipful lord, and soon her grace
Made grim old Government House a place
Of splendor and pomp and brilliant fame.

And Governor Wentworth prouder grew,
And the King as a mark of his pleasure gave
This subject of his, so leal and brave,
A baronet's title, bright and new.

When the honour was known in Halifax
Congratulations by the score
Through the daily post began to pour,
Magnificent in sealing-wax,

And Governor John to his lady spoke,
And they ordered a drawing-room held one day,
Late in the blossomy month of May,
For the Haligonian gentlefolk.

All the most notable men of the town,
Judges, and councillors twelve, were there,
The Council's president came in a chair,
With lace on his suit of velvet brown.

LADY WENTWORTH

Greatest of all was the Duke of Kent,
Who rode with an aid at his royal side,
Colonels and captains, too, the pride
Of the army and navy thither went.

Blowers and Brinley and Brenton and Strange
Drove to the door with their wives and their wigs,
Some in chariots, some in gigs,
Or walked, perhaps, for a healthful change.

Cochran and Francklin and Stewart vied
With Wallace and Lawson, so they say,
In eloquent tributes all that day
To the florid governor's family pride.

Wonderful costumes were there, I ween,
Satin waistcoats of every hue,
Carnation and yellow, mauve and blue,
Coats of the richest bottle green,

Dresses of lutestring and brocade
Falling from bodices long and slim,
Point-lace handkerchiefs, fastened prim,
Powdered hair over cushions laid.

ACADIAN BALLADS

Sweet was the air as it well could be,
Attar of rose and amber blent
With lavender and the entrancing scent
From Indian jars of pot-pourri.

Masculine tongues by wine were freed,
Good souchong by the dames was taken,
Gentlemen snuffed, if I'm not mistaken,
Brilliant the levee was indeed.

Lighting the whole like a sun or a star
Was beautiful Lady Wentworth's face,
And away from the spot where she stood in grace
Nobody lingered long or far.

The Prince spoke low in her exquisite ear,
Inglis, the bishop, touched his lips
In a dignified way to her finger tips,
And the other people all pressed near.

When the levee was over the verdict stood
That the Halifax Wentworths were just as fine
As their kin of the old Fitzwilliam line,
Or the Rockingham branch, of noble blood.

LADY WENTWORTH

The Baronet's wife ere long became
Lady in waiting to Charlotte, the Queen,
And fairer face or statelier mien
England's court can scarcely claim,

But Lady Wentworth, as all agree,
Won for her charms the highest praise
In those dear, far-off Colonial days
At Government House in Acadie.

OLD WHARVES

HALF a century ago,
On the tides that shoreward swept,
Merchant vessels, swift or slow,
To the harbour leapt or crept.

From the fertile Indian isles
In hot Southern seas they came,
Over Ocean's countless miles,
With red sunset fires aflame.

Fruited cargoes here they brought,
Guava, ginger, fig, and prune,
Rice and spice, and rare birds caught
In the sluggish tropic noon.

These old wharves re-echoed then
All the sounds of seaport trade,
Pulleys plied by strong-armed men,
Noisy anchors cast and weighed;

OLD WHARVES

Crashing, carrying, cheering loud,
Wild discordant bawl and brawl,
Black and white, a motley crowd—
Ah, but how men loved it all!

And the masts that hedged the town,
How they creaked in every breeze,
Standing bold and bare and brown,
Like unnumbered forest trees.

Proud old wharves, so silent now,
Haughtier in your grim decay
Than when many a princely prow
Sought you from the lower bay,

Symbols of dead dreams are ye,
Figures of the phantom piers
Where we made so buoyantly
Anchor in our earlier years.

Yet the barren tides that creep
Up the harbour night and morn,
Plunge and splash and laugh and leap
Round your bases old and worn,

ACADIAN BALLADS

Nothing now of sadness bear,
For our barks have found since youth
Roomier wharves, in harbours where
They may anchor fast to truth,

Till Time's petty traffic done,
All the bawl and brawl and strife,
Happier voyages are begun
To the shores of endless life.

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH

BUILT IN 1750

TIMBERED in times when men built strong,
With a tower of wood grown gray,
The frame of it old, the heart still young,
It has stood for many a day.

Winter and summer its bells ring out,
Jangle and clang and churn,
Music set for a merry rout,
With strains of a sweet nocturne.

The citadel glacis, smooth and steep,
And the granite fort on high
With its dangerous moat that none may leap,
And the rambling barracks nigh,

Seem as if made to serve its need,
To watch at its gates like friends,
As if barrack and moat, and church and creed
Pursued the same great ends.

ACADIAN BALLADS

Tablets cover its ancient walls
To men of virtues rare,
And hatchments as in English halls,
In gules and gold, are there,

And the same great throngs go in and out
As have gone a hundred years,
Gentle and simple—dark with doubt,
Oppressed by saintly fears,

Or with pride so pent in their narrow souls
That they have no power to see
That the favour of God to the meek is lent,
Though mean their lot may be.

What thrilling tales the church might tell,
What welcome sights reveal,
If a wizard's word could break the spell
That now its lips enseal,

It would picture the days when Breynton stood
At the top of its pulpit stair,
Gentle and generous, brave and good,
A stalwart man of prayer,

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH

It would tell of the Tories from Boston Bay
Who camped its walls beside,
Or flew to its friendly arms to pray
At morn or eventide,

Of women for fashion's sake who came
To its portals dark, in chairs,
Of ponderous men with transient fame
Who patronized its prayers,

Of the Loyalist Wentworth as he made
Response to the service free,
Of Lady Frances in silk arrayed,
And their heir, young Charles-Mary,

Of soldier-governors proud, niched high
In the walls of English fame,
Who voiced in its shade the human cry:
"Forgive, O Lord, my shame!"

It would point to the names of those that rest
'Neath chancel and aisle and pew,
De Seitz with the orange on his breast,
And Greville Montagu,

ACADIAN BALLADS

Of privileged councillors, judges grave,
And men of towering trust,
And British soldiers, staunch and brave,
All turned to powdered dust.

It would tell of the happy unions sealed
Within the hallowed fane,
Of the widowed souls that here have reeled,
'Neath staggering loads of pain ;

Of wraiths that have risen of sins long past
As people tried to pray,
Of light that has shone from heaven at last
And shamed the shades away.

Word of a wizard to break the spell
That lies, old church, on thee,
To open thy lips and bid thee tell
Thy treasured thoughts to me—

I never pass through thy portals kind,
When here my feet have chanced,
That silvery tongues do not unbind
And hold me long entranced.

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH

Timbered in times when men built strong,
Thy tower of wood grown gray,
The frame of thee old, the heart still young,
Dear church, for many a day,

Winter and summer, thy bells aloud
Shall jangle and clang and churn,
And men in thy shadow, meek or proud,
The way of heaven shall learn.

THE COTTAGE

IN a quaint cottage in the Acadian land
A poet's youth was spent,
Where waving dykes await the mower's hand
And orchards almost drown the air with scent.

In rambling picturesqueness on a hill,
Clad with luxuriant vines the cottage stood,
With gardens back where one could watch at will
The rich red tides sweep up from Fundy's flood.

On the dark walls within, the livelong day,
The sunbeams wove patterns of loveliest grace
And many a morn the boy half-conscious lay
And dreamed that round him hung like folds of lace

Fine purple fabrics woven by Indian looms
For princely palace walls inlaid with gold;
That subtle-textured stuffs bedecked the rooms
And splendid tapestries with scenes of old,

THE COTTAGE

And shimmering silks; that unknown hands had
drest

With them the winding halls and parlours square,
Draped the deep windows looking east and west
And made the old mansion plain a palace fair.

Such things he pictured till the morn went by,
Then the mixed colours that his garden wore,
The shadowy elms, the soft clouds floating by
To loftier realms his fervid fancy bore.

Visions of heavenly beauty haunted him,
The velvet dykes, the fields in which he strayed,
The blossoming orchards, even the forest dim,
Were thronged with spirit-forms that round him
played.

Who does not love the place where first he knew
Imagination's wondrous witchery,
Where his cramped soul first gathered wings and
flew
Beyond the accustomed bounds of sky or sea;

Who, travelling onward toward the setting sun
Keeps not in tender thought his earliest feast
Of beauty, when amidst sweet scenes he spun
Ecstatic visions, being nature's priest?

ACADIAN BALLADS

Gone is the cottage where in fresh day dreams
The boy to lovely lands first winged his flight,
Drank deep, delicious draughts from beauty's
streams

And felt the glory that sweeps round our night,

But the same sense of colour, form, and sound
Lives in him, and he knows that by and by,
Back of disharmony, when the Truth is found,
Beauty unspeakable will be seen to lie.

ORCHARDS IN BLOOM

BANKS of bloom on a billowy plain
Odours of orient in the air,
Pink-tipped petals that fall like rain,
Allah's garden everywhere.

Infinite depths in the blue above,
Glint of gold on the hill-tops gray,
Orioles trilling songs of love
With tireless throats the long June day.

Fields of emerald, tufted white,
Yellow, and azure, far outspread—
O the measureless soul-delight
In the scent of the clover blossoms red!

Revel of joy, sweet ecstasy,
Perfect life of the year begun,
Nothing to whisper of what shall be
When earth lies ripe in the autumn sun,

ACADIAN BALLADS

Never a hint that the orchards wide
Where Heaven's pink incense-torches burn
In the swift on-moving summertide
To heavy-fruited woods shall turn.

Pleasure it is to him who sips
The nectarous sweets that open here,
Maddening bliss to him who dips
Deep in the bowl of the blossoming year.

Banks of bloom on a billowy plain,
Odours of Heaven that fill the air,
Pink-tipped petals that fall like rain,
Allah's garden everywhere!

ATLANTIC MISTS

UP from the sea the white mists roll,
Soft as the robes a dancer sways,
Pure as the dreams that swathe the soul
Of a laughing child, at peace always.

The blue-veined hills at the north they hide
With a veil that hangs like filmy gauze,
And they lower and lift and fling aside
Their matchless drapery, without pause.

Grange and meadow and dyke below
Lie in the sun in calm content,
Hither and thither like wraiths they go,
But their shadowy grace on the cliffs is spent.

Up from the sea of silence sweep
Beautiful visions to the soul,
Thoughts that rest on the mountain steep
But have no power o'er the plain to roll;

ACADIAN BALLADS

Man is the child of field or grange,
So we say when our eyes are blind;
But the blue-veined hills we all shall range
And truths the white mists are, shall find.

IMPRESSIONS

BREADTHS of green and blue on the shallow
water,
Tufts of lighter green o'er the dune-lands gray,
Soundless deeps on deeps of a colour blended
Of green and blue and gold, in the sky to-day.

Topaz fires and red on the shallow water,
Rose and emerald mixed on the dune-lands gray,
Flames of crimson, gold, and Tyrian purple.—
This was the sunset blazon yesterday.

Opalescent tints on the shallow water,
Pink and green and blue on the dune-lands gray,
Lustrous lights in the sky, a pearly splendour,
Pageant this, of many a perfect day.

THE LADY OF THE FLOWERS

UP and down the garden walks
Every day I watch her go,
Past great clumps of nodding stalks
Crowned with blushing crimson roses,
Or with lilies, white as snow.

Lilacs dashing on the air
Persian odors, in delight
Bend and almost touch her hair;
On the bough where he reposes
Sings the oriole with his might.

She has crocuses in spring,
Yellow, purple, pink, and gray,
Daffodils that round her fling
Gold magnificently minted,
Snowdrops tender, jonquils gay.

THE LADY OF THE FLOWERS

Tulips, scarlet-mantled, turn
Richer red as she goes by,
Royal princesses that spurn
In their splendour, all unstinted,
Other flowers that venture nigh.

Easter lilies crave the touch
Of her carmine-tinted lips,—
Finer flowers by far than such
As bedeck the fields immortal,
Whose soft fragrance Juno sips.

Down a pink-plumed peony row
Into purple iris lanes,
Onward still I see her go,
To a Turk's-cap-lilied portal,
Where perpetual coolness reigns.

There in deep, luxuriant bowers
Of wistaria, rich with bloom,
Sits the Lady of the Flowers,—
Queens have subjects, myriads rally
Round her beautiful throne-room.

“High midsummer pomps” ere long
Crowd about their sovereign's feet,

ACADIAN BALLADS

Orange-spiked tritonias throng,
Orient poppies outward sally
To protect her royal seat.

Indian pinks, and blue-bells bound
In a chaplet, she may wear,
Trumpet flowers in crimson gowned
Like the queens of eastern story
She may have to deck her hair.

When September's gold and red
Make the world a sea of flame
Round her in ripe splendour spread
"Indian visions steeped in glory,"
Putting earlier scenes to shame,

Purple phlox in rich array,
Salvia in conspicuous rows,
Yellow cannas, larkspur gay,
Mignonette and musk carnations,
Dahlias in majestic pose.

All alike possess her heart,
She is sovereign, that they know,
But she never dwells apart

THE LADY OF THE FLOWERS

Like the queens of other nations
From her folk on planes below;

Through the winding garden walks
Every day she freely moves,
Holding sympathetic talks
With her friends, whate'er their stations,
For the meanest one she loves.

PURPLE ASTERS

I HAD a garden when I was a boy,
Wherein I planted fondly many a flower
And watched it grow until I felt the joy
That every gardener feels, as Nature's power
To make rare scents exhale from stalks of green
And dash rich colors o'er dull earth is seen.

In that old garden, bright with varied bloom
From crimson tulip time till winter fell,
It seemed as if no flower begotten of gloom
Had any right, or even should dare to dwell,
Yet o'er one spot where wildness still held sway
A sullen, sad, persistent shadow lay.

Amongst the grasses tangled field flowers grew,
Fringed, tender, trembling things that we called
weeds
(Names mean so little), always wet with dew,

PURPLE ASTERS

That clung to their pale disks in liquid beads,—
They seemed in the fine colour-symphony
Of the gay garden minor chords to be.

Here each September purple asters came
When earth wore gold and scarlet on her breast
And fields were ripe and Autumn's flood of flame
Swept noiseless o'er the woods from east to west,
They flaunted not in regal violet bloom
But seemed like tearful souls begot in gloom.

The lives of men are gardens from whose soil
Spring deep red-petalled roses, violets blue
As heaven; where passion flowers, too, fix their coil
Round frail anemones, heartsease, and rue;
But in some sheltered spots, bright blooms beside,
Pale, pleading purple asters always hide.

They tell us there are gardens richly clad
In crimson, sapphire, gold, awaiting men
Beyond the stars, where heavy hearts grow glad
And never to low levels sink again;
Can life so change that in such lands shall be
No purple asters of despondency?

ALICE HAMILTON

AS through a scented clover lane
I walked one summer day,
I met blithe Alice Hamilton,
Of the Hamiltons of Brae.

The sunlight rippling o'er the fields
And round the landscape gay
Caressed young Alice Hamilton,
Of the Hamiltons of Brae.

A gown of filmy white she wore,
As free from soil or stain
As her fresh life was free from care,
Her fervid heart from pain.

Ere long she met a ragged girl,
The child had lost her way
And cried as if her little soul
Would burst, that summer day;

ALICE HAMILTON

She took the sad one in her arms
And wiped its tears away
And kissed it, Alice Hamilton,
Of the Hamiltons of Brae.

What matter if her gown were soiled,
She cared not for the stain,
Her heart on the sweet task was set
Of soothing children's pain.

Her tenderness was deep, and so
There never passed a day
That from her love God did not light
A lamp for some dark way.

'Twas long ago she went from earth
Within the shadows gray,
Dear, helpful Alice Hamilton,
Of the Hamiltons of Brae;

She died before her own young heart
Had felt life's bitterest pain,
While laughter yet lay close to tears
As sunshine does to rain,

ACADIAN BALLADS

While violets still with carpets blue
Screened all unsightly clay,
And daffodils danced merrily
Beside the dreariest way,

But the clear torch she set alight
Shines like a sun to-day,
And men bless Alice Hamilton,
Of the Hamiltons of Brae.

JOSEPHINE

WHEN Lady Falkland made her home
In this fair land of Acadie
She loved incessantly to roam
About the woods and fields with thee,
O'er many a daisied meadow, green,
She danced with thee, sweet Josephine.

Past hedges of pink roses, wild,
That on the air their fragrance fling,
Ye wandered, thou scarce more than child,
She daughter of the Sailor King;
Where clustered hawthorns outward lean
Ye rested, often, Josephine.

Down lilac-bordered lanes ye went,
With honeysuckle half abloom,
And caught the shy, delicious scent

ACADIAN BALLADS

Of slender violets, hid in gloom,
Ye plucked the saffron celandine
And flaming Turk's-cap, Josephine.

When autumn's ripeness filled the air
And woods with scarlet were inwrought
And golden-rod gleamed everywhere,
The deep-blue gentian, fringed, ye sought,
No flower that grew was e'er too mean
To make your garland, Josephine.

She begged thy mother, but in vain,
For long companionship with thee,
She would have had thee in her train,
Her ward at court, perchance, to be,
What marvels might'st thou not have seen
Had'st thou gone with her, Josephine!

Ye parted, as so many part;
The fire of love, a ruddy flame,
Kindled in each responsive heart
But doomed to perish as it came,—
To be revived, sometime, I ween
In friendlier worlds, young Josephine.

DEATH IN ACADIA

CRIMSON the leaves of the maples had grown,
Earth in a purple pall was sleeping,
The South wind came with a stifled moan
Into the open casement creeping ;

From stagnant pools in the slumbering hills
The brook flowed languidly to the ocean,
And the tired wheels of the labouring mills
Were roused to only a feeble motion.

Home from the fields the reapers came,
Late-gleaned sheaves of the harvest bringing,
Deep in the forest, still aflame,
The last of the summer birds were singing ;

Grapes on the vine and glistening corn
With asters and golden-rod were vying,—
Alas that the year so blithely born
Should now in autumn's arms be dying!

ACADIAN BALLADS

The death of the year, and otherwhere
Death had fallen with loud lamenting,
There were spirits voicing strange despair,
There were some in silent grief-shades tenting.

Gone, could it be, from the face of the sun!
She who had reared strong lives and spoken
Words that had given men power to run
The roads of the world, so steep and broken.

Gone, could it be! and summer still
Rich in her veins and gold yet glinting
From her beautiful brow, so smooth until
Suddenly pain made cruel minting.

O the agony of the parting,
When the child in fear beholds his mother
Torn from the life she loves and starting,
Through what strange gates God knows, on another;

In difficult roads, perchance, to falter,
Weak for the want of the old sustaining,
Sick for the dear domestic altar
Whereon love burned, a torch unwaning.

DEATH IN ACADIA

With the crimsoning maples this had come,
Night had fallen on her noonday glory,
And common pity's lips grew dumb
Nor stammered out: "A time-worn story!"

The mourners lay 'neath a wintry sky
And saw from the frosty welkin's lashes
Tears fall fast, though their own were dry
As the fiery orb's when it flames and flashes.

But there dawned at last a sweet new day,
When over the hill tops hope came bursting
Into the hearts so cold and gray,
Into the souls for comfort thirsting;

Out of the silence wave-like swept
A stream of faith and strong believing,
And the mourners, prostrate, upward leapt
And drank it in, and ceased their grieving.

Crimson the leaves of the maples had grown,
The vines with the purple fields were vying,
Purple and crimson flowers were strown
On the fresh-made grave where her form was lying

ACADIAN BALLADS

And crimson and purple blending there
Became such glory as covers heaven
When the sun, at rest in his palace fair,
To the sky his royal robes has given.

Crimson the petals of hope had grown,
A purple pall o'er faith was lying,—
But suddenly doubt was overthrown
And the mourners knew there was no dying.

A SAINT

WHATEVER crowns the just may wear,
Whatever worlds of light there be,
I know his soul, unshackled, free,
Has come to share.

He reared an honourable name,
He lived almost the allotted span,
Since time first dawned no vigorous man
Has earned less blame—

So ran the record when he died ;
But who could fitly mete his worth,
His freedom from the sins of earth,
Deceit and pride;

His inward sense of righteousness,
The heed he gave to duty's call,
His faith that sorrows, great and small,
Are sent to bless.

ACADIAN BALLADS

Men seek the paths self-love has planned,
He scorned to walk in tortuous ways,
The light that lured him all his days
Was God's command.

His heart with pity was imbued,
And patience and self-sacrifice,—
He gave men these, and asked no price,
Even gratitude.

O saint, upon thy radiant brow
Such light appears we veil our eyes,
Heaven make us half as strong and wise,
And great, as thou!

Whatever crowns the just may wear,
Whatever worlds of light there be,
Thy spirit now, unshackled, free,
Must fully share.

PART II

THE LEGEND OF GLOOSCAP

BARING its breast to the sun as of yore
Stretches the fertile Acadian shore;
Waiting for sickle and scythe and wain
Glisten its fields of golden grain.

Like a sabred sentinel, grim and gray,
Blomidon stands at the head of the Bay,
And the turbulent ocean tides at will
Sweep into Minas Basin still.

Deep in the hills the Gaspereau
Babbles on to the sea below,
Crystal and clear, till Fundy's flood
Makes it a river red as blood.

Here is the spot, enringed with blue,
Where sparks from the forge of Basil flew,
Under these clustered willows green
Dwelt Gabriel's love, Evangeline.

ACADIAN BALLADS

Long ere the Frenchmen drove away
The encroaching tides from broad Grand Pré,
Binding the dykes like emerald bands
Round the murmuring meadow lands,

The Micmac sailed in his birch canoe,
In the track of the moon, the Basin blue,
Hunted the hills, or fell asleep
By his wigwam fire in the forest deep.

Skilled in many an Indian art
The dark-faced mother crooned apart
To her tired babes the folk-songs wild
That are sung to each Algonquin child.

Over the tribe with jealous eye
The Father of All kept watch on high,
In the purple mists of Blomidon
The mighty Glooscap had his throne.

No matter how far his feet might stray
From the usual haunts of the tribe away
When the Micmac uttered his cry of fear
He found his Glooscap there to hear.

THE LEGEND OF GLOOSCAP

'Twas Glooscap had sent for the Indian's use
Beaver and bear and mink and moose
Into the heart of the wild woodlands;
Glooscap had strewn the sparkling sands

Of the tide-swept beach of the stormy Bay
With amethysts purple and agates gray;
And into the heart of love had flung
That which keeps love ever young.

But the Frenchman came and with ruthless hand
Cut the forests and cleared the land,
And plowed and planted, till on the shore
Micmac and moose were seen no more;

And Glooscap went with his heart opprest
Into the wild, mysterious west,
While the Micmac kindled his wigwam fire
Far from the grave of his child and his sire.

Now, bravely bearing the thrusts of fate,
Passive-spirited, free from hate,
He hunts the moose when the snows lie deep
Fishes the streams where salmon leap,

ACADIAN BALLADS

Or patiently weaves his baskets gay
And paddles his birch canoe away;
But he always dreams of the ages when
Glooscap shall dwell with his tribe again.

L'ILE SAINTE CROIX

THE FIRST FRENCH SETTLEMENT IN AMERICA WAS
MADE HERE IN 1604

WITH tangled brushwood overgrown,
And here and there a lofty pine,
Around whose form strange creepers twine,
And crags that mock the wild sea's moan,

And little bays where no ships come,
Though many a white sail passes by,
And many a drifting cloud on high
Looks down and shames the sleeping foam,

Unconscious on the waves it lies,
While midst the golden reeds and sedge
That, southward, line the water's edge,
The thrush sings her shrill melodies.

No human dwelling now is seen
Upon its rude, unfertile slopes,
Though many a summer traveller gropes
For ruins midst the tangled green,

ACADIAN BALLADS

And seeks upon the northern shore
The graves of that adventurous band
That followed to the Acadian land
Champlain, De Monts, and Poutrincourt.

There stood the ancient fort that sent
Fierce cannon echoes through the wold,
There waved the Bourbon flag that told
The mastery of a continent;

There through the pines the echoing wail
Of ghostly winds was heard at eve,
And hoarse, deep sounds like those that heave
The breasts of stricken warriors pale.

There Huguenots and cassocked priests,
And noble-born and sons of toil,
Together worked the barren soil,
And shared each other's frugal feasts,

And dreamed beneath the yellow moon
Of golden reapings that should be,
Conjuring from the sailless sea
A glad, prophetic harvest-tune,

L'ILE ST. CROIX

Till stealthy winter through the reeds
 Crept, crystal-footed, to the shore,
 And to the little hamlet bore
His hidden freight of deathly seeds.

Spring came at last, and o'er the waves
 The welcome sail of Pontgravé,
 But half the number silent lay,
Death's pale first-fruits, in western graves.

Sing on, wild sea, your sad refrain
 For all the gallant sons of France,
 Whose songs and sufferings enhance
The witchery of the western main,

Keep kindly watch before the strand
 Where lie in hidden mounds, secure,
 The men De Monts and Poutrincourt
First led to the Acadian land.

POUTRINCOURT'S RETURN TO PORT
ROYAL

JULY, 1606

THE Western world, unclaimed and free,
A trackless forest lay,
Of dark pines by the polar sea,
Of palms by Tampa Bay,

Beneath the sheltering woods of Maine
A few French graves were seen,
And one lone flag, the flag of Spain,
Waved o'er St. Augustine,

When up Port Royal's basin flew,
Before the freshening breeze,
A ship whose weather-beaten crew
Had long sailed stormier seas.

Beyond the narrow ocean door
Rough-rolling Fundy lay,
But Fundy's fiercest tides forbore
To enter this blue bay.

POUTRINCOURT'S RETURN

The red-coned, resinous, raftered pines
The rocky heights o'erhung,
And down the laurel-starred inclines
The elms thick shadows flung,

Wild blossoms, scarlet, blue, and gold,
Spread colour everywhere,
And tiny throats sweet love tales told
July's soft, sensuous air.

Across the Atlantic, lonely, vast,
An almost untrod sea,
Proud Poutrincourt has come at last
With his mixed company;

Enraptured to the decks they press,
Hope in their hearts so strong
That some tell out their happiness
In strains of Breton song.

Here lies Port Royal; here Champlain
And venturous Pontgravé
Have made in Poutrincourt's domain
A long, delightful stay;

ACADIAN BALLADS

And here at last in safety dwell,
Once more attuned to joy,
The broken band whose comrades fell
At sorrowful St. Croix.

Some on the Bay are voyaging,
But some run down the shore
And make the woods with welcome ring
To valiant Poutrincourt.

The Micmacs, too, the strangers pale
With friendly gestures greet,
And round the ship delighted sail
Their mimic birchen fleet.

At last into the harbour green
A little sloop rides gay
And soon beside her masts are seen
Champlain and Pontgravé,

Then while the Bourbon lilies meet
The winds in glad caress,
Stout-hearted men each other greet
With yearning tenderness.

POUTRINCOURT'S RETURN

Thus rose in clear Acadian skies
Port Royal's peaceful star,
No Spanish conqueror's cruelties
Her earliest annals mar.

Though warlike men in later days
Laid waste the lovely shore,
Acadia's patriot sons must praise
The valorous Poutrincourt,

For he built on the Basin's strand,
Above the meadows green,
The oldest town in all the land
Save quaint St. Augustine.

L'ORDRE DE BON TEMPS

WINTER OF 1606-7

TWO hundred years ago and more,
When history was romance,
The white flag of the Bourbons flew
From all the gates of France,

And even on these stern Western shores
Rock-ribbed and forest-mailed,
The Bourbon name, the Bourbon fame
With "Vive le Roi" was hailed.

O "Vive le Roi!" and "Vive le Roi!"
Those wild adventurous days
When brave Champlain and Poutrincourt
Explored the Acadian bays,

When from Port Royal's rude-built walls
Gleamed o'er the hills afar
The golden lilies of the shield
Of Henry of Navarre.

L'ORDRE DE BON TEMPS

A gay and gallant company
Those voyagers of old
Whose life in the Acadian fort
Lescarbot's verse has told,

In mirth and merriment they formed
Their "Order of Good Cheer"
And many a mimic revel kept
Throughout the winter drear.

Aye, while the snow blew wildly o'er
The meadows crisp and bare,
And hooded the adjacent hills
Like nuns of Saint-Hilaire,

Each day they spread a goodly feast
Not anywise too poor
To suit the taste of such as dine
In famous Rue Aux Ours.

Then as the old French clock rang out,
With echoes musical,
Twelve silvery strokes, the hour of noon,
Through the pine-scented hall,

ACADIAN BALLADS

The Master of the Order came
To serve each hungry guest,
A napkin o'er his shoulder thrown,
And flashing on his breast

A collar decked with diamonds,
And pearls and turquoise blue,
While close behind in warrior dress
Walked old Chief Membertou;

Then wine went round, and friends were
pledged
With kindly courtesy,
And ne'er was heard one longing word
For France beyond the sea.

O days of bold adventure past,
O gay, adventurous men,
Your "Order of Good Times" I think
Shall ne'er be seen again,

For proud Port Royal's fortress is
A peaceful ruin now,
Where booming guns have yielded place
To sickle, scythe, and plow,

L'ORDRE DE BON TEMPS

And commerce rules these shores remote,
And trading vessels ply
The seas where frigates used to float
The Bourbon flag on high,

And kings and queens and captains brave
To other lands are wed,
And the rare witchery romance gave
These western wilds is dead.

THE BAPTISM OF MEMBERTOU

JUNE 24, 1610

“**O**UT of the fort!” came the word of command,
“Shoreward, good comrades of Poutrin-
court’s band!”

Wide swung the gates in the earth-bastioned wall,
No one delayed, save the guard, at the call.

Soldiers stepped quickly with clattering feet
Over the wooden moat-bridge to the street,
Swords rattled, sabre sheaths flashed to the sky,
Sentries saluted and colours waved high.

Through fern-clad fields to the shell-covered shore
Swift marching, trod the trained veteran corps,
Captained, accoutred, as if on the tide
Some English war-ship that day had been spied.

THE BAPTISM OF MEMBERTOU

Look o'er the basin as far as you may
Not a sail flecks the horizon to-day,
Not a sound ruffles the still air of June
Save the satisfied swish of the tide at high noon,

But by the sea-verge, his eyes to the east,
Vested and stoled, stands the Recollet priest;
Captains and courtiers around him, in state,
Lackeys and laborers, expectantly wait.

Forth from their steep-pointed wigwams of pine
Silently stepping in slow single line,
Speechless, as if by a vision struck dumb,
Hundreds of wampum-decked Indians come,

Back of old Membertou, chief of the land,
Reverently facing the friar they stand,
Childlike, submissive, some true sense of need
Sealing their spirits to Christ and his creed.

Eastward the river, lethargic and dun,
Lies like a serpent asleep in the sun,
Southward the forest, an ocean of green,
Rolls its luxuriant waves from the scene.

Suddenly sounds from the guard on the wall
One silver bugle-blast, and at the call

ACADIAN BALLADS

Josué Flèche, the spare Recollet priest,
Piously crossing himself to the east,

Chants in good Latin faith's formula old,
Said through the ages by millions untold.
Making the sign of the Christian belief
First he baptizes the gray-headed chief,

Then to the tribe fathers, twenty or more,
Gives the blest rite, while away from the shore
To the edge of the pine woods, all trackless and dim,
Travel the strains of the Church's great hymn:

"*Te Deum laudamus*," sing soldier and priest,
"The world doth adore thee, the west like the east;
Acadia's children with angels on high
Henceforth to the Son of the Virgin shall cry."

This was the new world's first triumph for God,
Here on Port Royal's fresh-burgeoning sod
Poutrincourt's pioneer band ushered in
Christian beliefs and the conquest of sin.

Carry the news of it back to the east,
Tell how Acadia's Recollet priest
Won to the Church and her sacraments true
These Micmac men and their chief, Membertou,

THE BAPTISM OF MEMBERTOU

Plucked the first fruits of whole harvests to be,
Kindled a fire that the ages should see;
Let the news spread how a continent came
Under the sway of the thrice holy name!

LA TOUR AND BIENCOURT

BIENCOURT DIED IN 1623

WHEN Henry of Navarre was king
The muse would sometimes lure
The gay Lescarbot's lips to sing
In praise of Poutrincourt,

My muse commands me shrine the names
In sympathetic lay
Of two sweet youths, whose friendship claims
Fond thoughts from us alway.

From France light-heartedly they sailed,
Youngest of all the band
Whose fortunes ruddier grew, or paled,
In the Acadian land.

Here their fresh lives enlinked as one
And love's rich fruitage bore,
No sweeter union 'neath the sun
Than Biencourt's with La Tour.

LA TOUR AND BIENCOURT

They trod the strand of purple bays,
Explored the forests deep,
Canoed the dark-pooled water ways
Where salmon plunge and leap,

Welcomed the first faint flush of spring,
The warm light on the hills,
The happy bluebirds on the wing,
Nature's unnumbered thrills,

Outwatched the light of summer moons
Amidst old Fundy's roar,
Listened the crying of the loons
On Digby's lonely shore,

And every season's fresh surprise
Kindled their love anew,
And every toilsome enterprise
Their hearts still closer drew.

At last Biencourt's fortunate star
The western skies upclomb,
And to the court of proud Navarre
His fame went echoing home,

ACADIAN BALLADS

But in the vicarious rule of France,
Amidst the strife and stir
That marked young Acadie's advance,
Two heads and hearts there were.

Ere fortune's light had come to wane,
Or hope to dim by doubt,
Somewhere in his beloved domain
Biencourt's life went out,

And bitterer tears were never shed
By manly eyes before
Than grief wrung for his brother, dead,
From loyal Charles La Tour.

Henceforth the Acadian coast to him
Was like a desert bare,
The sedge that lined the river's brim
Sang out his grief to air,

He sought the spots where sad pines moan
And plaintive hemlocks wave,
And many a night he slept alone
Beside Biencourt's grave.

MADAME LA TOUR

DEFENCE OF THE FORT, APRIL, 1645

A GAINST the background of the shadowy
years

Are painted, but they have no smiles or tears
Or heart-throbs, like the living ones we know,
The forms of most great men, dead long ago.

Some spirits have there been in history,
Who with the vanished centuries cannot die,
But in the living world still keep their place,
So strong are they, so charged with every grace.

This noble heroine of the Acadian land,
A woman born for love and for command,
Enframed with brilliant forests and blue bays
Seems like a picture, but she lives with us always.

Amidst the fogs that hide the rugged face
Of the New Brunswick shore with filmy grace,

ACADIAN BALLADS

In Fort La Tour, stockaded, bastioned, bold,
The great seignorial captain's chief stronghold,

She long withstood the plunderer Charnisay,
Her husband's enemy, who night and day,
Camped near the walls, with cat-like, covetous eyes
Sought the small force that held it to surprise.

Denys has told us that with breaking heart
She stood, compelled to bear a witness' part
As, trapped at last by fiendish treachery,
Her faithful soldiers were led out to die.

Then wrung with pain, with eyes forever blind
To sights of joy, through desolate days she pined,
Till where the tides fall tremulous on the shore
She slept, the heroic wife of Charles La Tour.

Whence came she to Acadia, what her name,
Live her French forefathers in rolls of fame,
Why braved she wild, tempestuous ocean floods,
To find rude shelter in these homeless woods?

Our questions echo 'gainst unanswering skies,
The forests, too, guard well their mysteries;
But Acadie's traditions would be poor
Without the memory of Dame La Tour.

MADAME LA TOUR

Devoted woman, Greece and Rome of old
Admiring tales of their great daughters told,
And shall we let thy name be lost among
The multitudes whose lives go all unsung?

Ah no, beside the stern New Brunswick strand
And through the length of this delightful land
Thou shalt be well remembered; even the sea
Shall sing continuous requiem for thee.

THE NAMING OF THE GASPEREAU

ABOUT 1673

NOW the rainbow tints of autumn
Deck the ancient hills
And the dreamy river saunters
Past the lazy mills,
Let us seek the murmuring forest
Where the pines and hemlocks grow
And a thousand fringed shadows
Fall upon the Gaspereau.

When the first Acadian farmers,
Sailing up the Bay,
Landed with their goods and cattle
On the fair Grand Pré,
Wandering through the ancient forest,
Claude, René, and Theriot,
In a vale of wondrous beauty
Found the River Gaspereau;

THE NAMING OF THE GASPEREAU

Found the simple-hearted Micmac,
In his birch canoe,
Paddling down his *Magapskegechk*
To the Basin blue,
Little dreaming of the presence
Of the Indian's pale-faced foe,
Singing unmelodious boat-songs
On the winding Gaspereau.

Midst the brushwood and the rushes
And the trembling ferns,
Where the River, sighing, singing,
Speeds with many turns
Through the gateway of the mountains
Toward the meadows far below,
On they crept in silent wonder
By the sun-kissed Gaspereau.

In these days of dream and legend,
Life all fresh and new,
Even humble Norman peasants
Into poets grew;
From their roaming in the forest
Claude, René, and Theriot
Brought their comrades magic stories
Of the vale of Gaspereau.

ACADIAN BALLADS

By the crackling hemlock fire
In a cabin rude,
With their store of cheese and brown-bread
And their ale, home-brewed,
Gathered then the Norman peasants,
And at last René said low:
“Let us name the new-found river
Gaspère-water, Gaspereau!”

Gaspère was the kindest comrade
In their little band,
None so buoyant, none so eager
Through the Acadian land;
But ere half the voyage was over,
On fierce Fundy's rolling seas
Suddenly there crept beside him
Some old shadow of disease.

There was mourning in the vessel,
Strong men sobbed and cried,
When one evening just at sunset,
Gentle Gaspère died;
There was wailing in the vessel
As, with trembling voice and slow,
Père Deschambault read the death-prayers
As the still form sank below.

THE NAMING OF THE GASPEREAU

Dreary was the voyage thereafter
On the cruel Bay,
Till they reached the sheltered, smiling
Meadows of Grand Pré,
Then their accustomed songs at evening
Were subdued and sad and low;—
So they named the lovely river,
With fond memory, Gaspereau!

Many a summer, when the plowing
In the fields was done,
And the busy looms were growing
Silent, one by one,
Lovers in the mellow moonlight,
From the travelled streets below,
Sought the path across the meadows
To the banks of Gaspereau.

When there came some loss or sorrow
To the little band;
When the dykes broke, or the crops failed
In the Acadian land,
Many a tired wife and mother,
In the silver twilight-glow
Sought relief from dark foreboding
By the peaceful Gaspereau.

ACADIAN BALLADS

Vanished are the Acadian peasants,
Sweet Evangeline,
Gabriel, Benedict, and Basil,
And no sadder scene
Ever gave itself to story,
Than that scene of wreck and woe
When the English ships weighed anchor
In the mouth of Gaspereau.

Still it flows among the meadows,
Singing as of yore
To the ferns and trailing mosses
On the winding shore;
To the pines that dip their branches
In the crystal wave below,
And the crimson leaves of autumn
Falling in the Gaspereau.

THE GHOSTS OF THE ACADIANS

IT is the hour of sunset, and the hills of Gaspereau
Lie half in purple shadow and half in crimson
glow;
Day's deafening chorus ended, on the clear-echo-
ing air
The college bell is ringing a special call to prayer.

The fitful, faltering music, as through a swaying
door
Sweeps now across the Basin to distant Beau
Séjour;
Then, weakening to a chorus of laughter, sobs and
sighs,
Seems like a ghostly requiem sung by dead centuries.

Below the embowered village extends the wide
Grand Pré,

ACADIAN BALLADS

A thousand emerald acres, where light and shadow
 play,
And there the gleaming water, and the masted
 ships that ride
Near Blomidon, grim guardsman of the gateway
 of the tide;

And fisher-people tying belated boats to shore,
And farmers plodding homeward, all weary and
 footsore,
And children calling cattle that from the dykes
 have strayed,
And great hay-wagons creeping from out the wil-
 lows' shade.

But soon the darkness deepens and night's cold
 dews come down,
And then the Acadian farmers roam forth through
 field and town.
Again above the ramparts of bastioned Beau
 Séjour
The white flag of the Bourbons salutes the Cobe-
 quid shore,

And rude French fishing vessels drift outward to
 the Bay,

THE GHOSTS OF THE ACADIANS

And peaceful homes encircle the meadows of
Grand Pré.

Above the rustic cradle, to hush her baby's cry,
The fond Acadian mother sings sweet French lullaby,

And maidens with their lovers dance on the village
green,

Amongst them stalwart Gabriel, and his Evangeline,

While from the open church door, as young at
heart as they,

Nods saintly Père Felician, and bids his flock be gay.

But now New England soldiers are camped by
Basil's forge,

And o'er the town is waving the red cross of St.
George,

And British swords are gleaming, and women are
in flight,

And children's cries are rending the silence of the
night.

At last fierce flames encircle the houses of Grand
Pré,

And Winslow's vessels hurry upon the tide away,

ACADIAN BALLADS

While lurid shadows linger where red gleams fell
aslant

The fruitful fields of Minas and the dykes of
Habitant.

O pity for the sorrow that shrouds the Minas shore,
The bitter desolation of ancient Beau Séjour,
The weeping of the exiles across the moaning tide,
The Acadian farmer people, that in strange lands
abide.

From Maine to California, bewildered groups, they
stand,
With eyes turned ever eastward to the Acadian
land,
Their plaintive songs reëchoed by strange, un-
feeling skies,
Like the old Mantuan shepherd's or Hebrew
psalmist's cries.

O poor Acadian peasants, ye fell on troublous times,
When lust of large dominion filled all the world
with crimes,
When Holy Church gave sanction to most unholy
strife
And the Galilean's gospel was not the law of life.

THE GHOSTS OF THE ACADIANS

Now, wrongs like those ye suffered, thank Heaven,
have ceased to be,
Since church and state know better Christ's law of
charity,
Now men repose in safety by labour's peaceful
forge,
'Neath the white flag of the Bourbons and the red
cross of St. George;—
Yet earth has misconceptions and cruelties to-
day
As great as caused your downfall, ye peasants of
Grand Pré,

The lust of power is rampant, the love of gold is
strong,
Some use in selfish pleasure what others gained by
wrong,
The young too soon bear burdens, the aged toil too
late,
Hearts made for trust and pity are driven to fear
and hate.

Slow comes the reign of knowledge, slow dawns the
perfect light;
But from a thousand hill-tops we look into the night
And see earth's wide horizon in many spots aglow,

ACADIAN BALLADS

And spite of present darkness and present pain we
know
That some day false ambition shall turn to purpose
strong,
And be he counted conqueror who lives to conquer
wrong.

THE PHANTOM LIGHT OF THE BAIE DES CHALEURS

'TIS the laughter of pines that swing and sway
Where the breeze from the land meets the
breeze from the bay,
'Tis the silvery foam of the silver tide
In ripples that reach to the forest side;
'Tis the fisherman's boat, in a track of sheen
Plying through tangled seaweed green,
O'er the Baie des Chaleurs.

Who has not heard of the phantom light
That over the moaning waves, at night,
Dances and drifts in endless play,
Close to the shore, then far away,
Fierce as the flame in sunset skies,
Cold as the winter light that lies
On the Baie des Chaleurs?

ACADIAN BALLADS

They tell us that many a year ago,
From lands where the palm and the olive grow,
Where vines with their purple clusters creep
Over the hillsides gray and steep,
A knight in his doublet, slashed with gold,
Famed, in that chivalrous time of old,
For valorous deeds and courage rare,
Sailed with a princess wondrous fair
To the Baie des Chaleurs.

That a pirate crew from some isle of the sea,
A murderous band as e'er could be,
With a shadowy sail, and a flag of night,
That flaunted and flew in heaven's sight,
Swept in the wake of the lovers there,
And sank the ship and its freight so fair
In the Baie des Chaleurs.

Strange is the tale that the fishermen tell,—
They say that a ball of fire fell
Straight from the sky, with crash and roar,
Lighting the bay from shore to shore;
That the ship, with a shudder and a groan,
Sank through the waves to the caverns lone
Of the Baie des Chaleurs.

THE PHANTOM LIGHT

That was the last of the pirate crew;
But many a night a black flag flew
From the mast of a spectre vessel, sailed
By a spectre band that wept and wailed
For the wreck they had wrought on the sea, on
the land,
For the innocent blood they had spilt on the sand
Of the Baie des Chaleurs.

This is the tale of the phantom light
That fills the mariner's heart, at night,
With dread as it gleams o'er his path on the bay,
Now by the shore, then far away,
Fierce as the flame in sunset skies,
Cold as the winter moon that lies
On the Baie des Chaleurs.

DE SOTO'S LAST DREAM

1543

ON a shadowy plain where cypress groves
And spreading palm trees rise,
And the antlered deer, swift-footed, roves,
The brave De Soto lies.

They have made him a bed, where high o'erhead
The trailing moss entwines
With the leaves of the campion flower red,
And gleaming ivy vines.

Over his fevered forehead creeps,
From the cedar branches high,
The wind that sleeps in the liquid deeps
Of the changeless southern sky,

And the Mississippi's turbid tide,
Broad and free, flows past,
Like the current wide, on which men glide
To another ocean vast.

DE SOTO'S LAST DREAM

He dreams of the days in sunny Spain
When heart and hope were strong,
And he hears again on the trackless main
The sound of the sailor's song.

Now, with the fierce Pizarro's band,
To wield the sword anew,
He takes command on the golden sand
Of the shores of proud Peru,

And northward now, from Tampa Bay,
With glittering spear and lance,
With pennons gay, and horses' neigh,
His cohorts brave advance.

Again, as the glittering dawn awakes
From its dreams of purple mist,
By the stoléd priest he kneels and takes
The holy eucharist,

And the echoing woods and boundless skies
Are hushed to soft content,
As the strains of the old Te Deum rise
On a new continent.

ACADIAN BALLADS

Again he sees in the thicket damp,
By the light of a ghastly moon,
The crocodile, foul from his native swamp,
Plunge in the dark lagoon.

Again o'er the wild savannas flee
From his feet the frightened deer,
And the curlews scream from tree to tree
Discordant notes of fear.

From deep magnolia woods abloom,
And orange thickets white,
Drunk with the sensuous perfume
Shrill mocking birds take flight,

And calm in the depths of her silken nest,
Embowered in softest green,
With scarlet breast and golden crest,
The wild macaw is seen.

In the waving grass, on yucca spires,
Near flowers of pallid hue
Are born the erythrina's fires
And the starry nixia's blue;

DE SOTO'S LAST DREAM

The rich gordonia's bosom swells
Where the brooklet ripples by,
And silvery-white halesia bells
Reflect the cloudless sky,

And graceful southern mosses, brown,
With gleaming ivies twine,
And heavy purple blooms weigh down
The dark wistaria vine.

Now on his bold Castilian band
The native warriors press,
From their haunts in the trackless prairie land,
And the unknown wilderness,

And the flame he has kindled gleams again
On his sword of trusty steel,
As he burns, midst the yells of savage men,
Their village of Mobile.

* * * * *

Like the look of triumph o'er victories won
That dying conquerors wore,
Or the light that bursts from the setting sun
On some cold, craggy shore,

ACADIAN BALLADS

The fire of hope lights up anew
The brave adventurer's brow,
A roseate flash,—then death's dull hue,
And his dream is over now.

So, on the plain where cypress groves
And spreading palm trees rise,
And the antlered deer, swift-footed, roves,
The brave De Soto dies.

PORT ROYAL

ABOUT this ancient earth-work and this wall,
Where rude spiked gates on heavy hinges
hung,
The shouts of armies many a time have rung,
And thunderous cannon sounded loud o'er all.

Here, night and morn, the echoing bugle call
Close to the farthest wooded hill-tops clung,
Here with her lilies to the breezes flung,
France held Acadia in romantic thrall.

Here Bourbon nobles carved the fleur de lis,
And waved the white flag of the Bourbon kings;
Here Acadie's first convert, Membertou,
The aged Micmac chieftain, bent the knee
To Christ; and here on wide-expanded wings
The hostile fleets of British sovereigns flew.

GRAND-PRÉ

A RARE enchantment rests upon the place
Where Gabriel wooed and won Evangeline;
On these broad, fertile dyked-lands, emerald-green,
Lies the soft spell of a romantic race.

Where winds the Gaspereau with serpent grace
Along the vale, Acadian homes have been,
On this slight mound they tell us once was seen
A cross-crowned church; here ancient willows
trace

A favorite street, while in this open field
Tradition says the Acadians placed their dead.
Yonder lies Minas Basin in the sun,
Gleaming like some recumbent warrior's shield;
Above, a white mist-turban round his head,
Sheik of the land sits hoary Blomidon.

CHEBUCTO BAY

WHEN England's power at last would be
complete

On all the tide-washed shores of Acadie,
Cornwallis brought his goodly company,
Anchoring in this blue bay his noble fleet.

Here grew a sturdy city, street by street,
And forts were reared beside the surging sea,
Here royal Edward dwelt, grandsire to be
Of him whose empire scarce knows bound or
mete.

Here Wentworth and his Tory compeers came
When fierce rebellion rent the neighboring land,
Foes to the foes of England and the king;
To this proud citadel of ancient fame,
Decade by decade, white-sailed war-ships manned
By soldier seamen, British warriors bring.



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Acadian ballads

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